

MACLURE, K., GIBSON SMITH, K., PAUDYAL, V. and STEWART, D. 2018. Development of a tool to support community pharmacy engagement with patients who may be homeless. Presented at the 78th International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) world congress of pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences (FIP 2018), 2-6 September 2018, Glasgow, UK.

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2018

Development of a tool to support community pharmacy engagement with patients who may be homeless

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BACKGROUND

Homelessness remains a global public health concern. A prior survey indicated the need for pharmacist training and coverage of the topic of homelessness around minimising impact of medicines use, referring for social support, confidence in broaching the subject with patients, support and guidelines for practice.

PURPOSE

To explore community pharmacists' views on the need for, type and content of a tool to support their engagement with patients who may be homeless.

METHODS

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed based on existing literature, survey results and theoretical frameworks (Theoretical Domains Framework; COM-B model) Community pharmacists from England and Scotland who had taken part in a survey consented to take part in a follow-on, digitally recorded telephone interview. Each was transcribed then coded using a framework approach. Ethical approval had been gained.



CONCLUSIONS

Community pharmacists perceive that they are capable, motivated and have the opportunity to better engage with patients considered to be homeless. However, this was a small cohort and further research is indicated to inform support tool design.



RESULTS

Interviews (n=15) conducted November-December 2017 found all participants felt capable and were motivated to improve their approach when engaging with patients who may be experiencing homelessness. They welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the content and format of a support tool. They also thought the topic should be better covered at undergraduate and continuing professional development. Some suggested role play to improve confidence and all felt capable if provided with up-to-date information on local homelessness support services.

